LOVE STORY (Rank-Eagle Lion, 1944) Directed by Leslie Arliss; Produced by Harold Hunt; Screenplay by Leslie Arliss and Dorreen Montgomery from a short story by J. W. Drewbell; Camera, Bernard Knowles; Musical director, Louis Devy; "Gormish Rhapsody" composed by Hubert Bath; piano solos by Harriet Cohen; a Gainsborough Production; U.S. release by Universal in 1947 under the title "A Lady Surrenders"; 108 mins.

Additional dialogue: Rodney Ackland

With: Margaret Lockwood (Felicity Crichton-Lissa Campbell); Stewart Granger (Kit Firth); Patricia Roc (Judy Martin); Tom Walls (Tom Tanner); Reginald Purdell (Albert); Moira Lester (Carol); Dorothy Drasbhall (Susie); Vincent Howard (Prospero); Joan Reynolds (Zoe); A. E. Matthews (Col. Pitt-Smith); Beatrice Varley (Mrs Rossiter); and George Merritt, Roy Emerson, Bryan Herbert, Josephine Middleton, Lawrence Hanway, Bryan Haney, Roy Beer.

Rank formed the Eagle-Lion distribution arm in 1944 as a means of isolating the "prestige" films like "A Canterbury Tale" and "The Way Ahead". It soon became apparent however that some of the bigger but wholly commercial films might well benefit from a "prestige by association" label, and "Love Story" became the first of its type to go out under the Eagle-Lion banner. Despite being somewhat (to say the least) overwrought and wild and woolly, it was a huge commercial success in its day. Lockwood, already a big star, was on the virtual brink of super-star status, and Stewart Granger, despite an annoying nasal mannerism which made him look as though he was about to come down with a cold, was also one of the few big new male stars of the day. After a long career in farcical lechery a la Groucho Marx, this was Tom Walls' first essay in "lovable father substitute" roles, and he was to prove a much better character actor than comic lead (though he had been enormously popular in farces of the 30's). Gainsborough were constantly packing off and switching roles from Lockwood to Patricia Roc, sometimes, as in "Wicked Lady", Lockwood would be totally evil and Roc all hapless innocence, and then in "Jassy" the roles would be reversed - except that Roc was too attractive and wholesome looking to be convincingly "bad". Usually her "villainy" was in the kind of role she has here - selfish and conniving, but no more. Here they try to make her more of a femme fatale by dressing her in overalls and have her smoke constantly, but it doesn't quite come off - and just as Cary Grant would have been much better off to marry the mousey librarian in "Bringing Up Baby", so one can't help feeling that Granger would have been better advised to marry Roc here! It's a typical wartime romance that enabled the housewives, themselves much put upon, to wallow in the greater and more artificial self-scrutiny shown on the screen and to find in it a kind of contemporary escapism. Its plot is pretty absurd, but the cast and larger-than-life bravura of it all well-handled by Leslie Arliss who directed Lockwood and Granger in the previous year's "The Man in Grey". Cameraman Bernard Knowles would switch to directing the next year with the Lockwood-Mason "A Place of One's Own", just as another Gainsborough cameraman, Arthur Crabtree, would be promoted to director in 1944 with the Roc-Granger "Madonna of the Seven Moons". Roc was of the loveliest of the Gainsborough ladies and one of the best actresses, but never achieved really major stardom. Foohing a major production, "Love Story" has some surprisingly obvious back projection and artificial sets - the latter particularly obvious in view of the location work in Cornwall - but there were many shortages and economies during the war, and to his credit, Rank didn't mind spending money on films that needed real production values, like "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp". In any case, with the much publicised Cornish Rhapsody - another one of those interchangeable piano concertos that ran smack in British wartime movies - an over-riding romantic aura was considered more important than realism.

----- Ten Minute Intermission -----